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The Tamil land and the Eastern Colonies

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Tamil influences on the early script, language, architecture and so on of the Malaya peninsula and archipelago have been traced by several scholars; but references to these lands in early Tamil literature are somehow not so frequent as one would expect. One decidedly early reference occurs in the *Paṭṭinappālai* where, among the imports into the city of Puhār or Kāveripattinam is included *Kālagattu ākkaṁum* i.e. produce from Kālagam, which has been interpreted to mean Kaḍāram, modern Kedah as Çoedés demonstrated in his celebrated paper *La Royaume de Çrivijaya*¹. The equation of Kaḍāram with Kālagam is found in the geographical section of the *Divākaram*, the earliest lexicon in the Tamil language now accessible to us. The *Paṭṭinappālai* is a poem of the time of Cōḷa Karikāla, and cannot be placed much later than the end of the second century A.D. or the beginning of the third.

It is the aim of this short note to invite attention to another of these all too rare early Tamil texts mentioning the eastern colonies and their trade connections with South India. It occurs in Canto XIV (ll. 106-10) of the *Śilappadikāram*, and reads :

ōṅgirum parappin
vaṅga-viṭṭattut-Toṇḍiyōr-iṭṭa
vagilun-dugilum-āvamum-vāsamun-
dogu-karuppūramuñ-jumanduḍan vanda
koṇḍaloḍu pugundu.

The literal meaning of these lines is as follows: 'Having entered together with the east wind that came laden with (the aroma) of aloe, silks, sandal, spices, and camphor put by the residents of Toṇḍi on board a fleet of tall roomy ships.' The place said to be entered is the city of Madura, an inland city; that is why the poet is careful to say that the person who entered the city did so with the eastern wind (*koṇḍal*); and the thought of the eastern wind calls up the image of an armada of merchantmen laden with the cargo of precious articles specified in lines 3 and 4 of the citation. It will be noticed that the articles are all of them special products of the eastern lands on which we have always depended for a supply of them, as the present war conditions have sharply reminded us.

1 *BETEO.*, xviii, 6, pp. 19 ff.

There are two commentaries available on this text. The earlier commentary (anonymous) correctly interprets the text without introducing a single extraneous idea, and leaves it there; we may note, however, that the word *vāsam* (spices) is explained as comprising *takkōlam* (cubeb), *Jātikkāy* (nutmeg) and other substances. 'Takkōlam' would doubtless recall to the reader's mind the learned discussion of this word by Sylvain Lévi in his essay on *Ptolémée, Le Niddesa, et la Br̥hatkathā* in *Etudes Asiatiques*. The later annotator, Aḍiyārkkunallār who wrote sometime about the fourteenth century A.D. makes a greater display of the knowledge and beliefs of his time. The whole comment is too long for reproduction, and we shall notice only the points that concern our enquiry. He makes it clear that *Toṇḍi* was a town in the east—a natural inference from the mention of *Koṇḍāl* in the text, as *koṇḍal* is a special name for the eastern wind. Then he says that the kings of *Toṇḍi* sent the articles mentioned as tribute to the ruler of Madura—an intrusive statement for which there is no warrant in the neutral words *Toṇḍiyor—iṭṭa*, placed in ships by those of *Toṇḍi*—of the text of the poem. We should not hesitate to reject this suggestion of a political relation between the Pāṇḍyan kingdom and *Toṇḍi* of the East. The note on the list of articles is of great interest as bringing before us traces of a considerable technical lore of which the sources are unknown to us. Of *agil* (aloe wood), for instance, he mentions three varieties—*arumaṇavan*, *takḱoli*, *kiḍāraṇavan*, obviously getting their names from *Rāmañña*, *Takkōla*, and *Kiḍāra* (*Kaḍāra*) very interesting from our point of view. Again, among the many varieties of *tugiḷ* (silks) noticed is *Kālagam* i.e. produced in *Kālagam* or *Kaḍāram*. Among the varieties of *āraṇ* (sandal) occurs *haricandana*, famous in early Javanese epigraphy as the material out of which images of *Agastya* were made at one time. Like his predecessor whom he closely follows generally, Aḍiyārkkunallār includes *takḱōlam* and *Jātikkāy*, cubeb and nutmeg, with many other substances like *lavaṅgam* under *vāsam*. Of camphor he seems to mention no fewer than fourteen kinds, *Cinaccūḍam*—China camphor—among them.

Finally, he crowns the whole by saying that '*Toṇḍiyor*' stands for '*śōlakulattor*' descendants of the *Coḷa* family. This comment has gone far to misguide modern students, and obscure the significance of the text for a long time. For the late Dr. Swaminatha Aiyer added a note to it saying that we may infer from this that there was a *Toṇḍi* on the east coast of South India which was different from the celebrated *Toṇḍi* of the *Ceras* on the west coast², and subject to the

² Tyndis of the *Periplus* and Ptolemy.

rule of the Coḷas. All these remarks have been reproduced in their entirety by Mr. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar in his translation of the *Śilappadikāram*, and he goes one step further and identifies Toṇḍi of this text with the homonymous place on the coast of the Ramnad district; he recognises, however, that most of the articles mentioned came from the Archipelago islands in the east.³

The history of error is not without interest, and one is tempted to ask how did the learned Aḍiyārkkunallār come to gloss 'Toṇḍiyor' with 'śōlakulattōr'? Was he thinking of the naval expeditions of the Coḷas against the empire of Śrīvijaya of which the memory might have been still alive in his time? If that was so, did the Coḷas leave behind a branch of the royal family to hold sway over their fresh conquests in these lands? But of all this we have little evidence from other sources. Or was the annotator only confusing 'Toṇḍiyor' with 'Toṇḍaiyar' and basing his gloss on the story in the *Maṇimekhalai* in which a Toṇḍaiyan is born out of the liaison between a Coḷa prince from Negapatam and a Nāga princess Pilivaḷi by name? However that may be, he does not say anything on the location of Toṇḍi. It is placed on the east coast and more precisely identified with Toṇḍi on the Ramnad coast—a place which rose into some importance in the twelfth century A.D.—by the modern writers cited above. But then, how are we to explain the fleet of tall roomy ships on which these precious cargoes are placed by the people of Toṇḍi for their being carried off by the wind to the Madura coast?

It is clear the Toṇḍi must be some place in the lands colonised by the people of South India across the seas. We have a Tirunelvéli in Jaffna, and a Madura island near Java, and other toponymous identities will easily occur to the student of the subject. At the moment I am unable to suggest any suitable identification, and it is my main object to place the facts as they appear to me before scholars who may not be readers of Tamil but whose co-operation would be of value in discovering this place.

I do not believe that the *Śilappadikāram* is an early work like the *Paṭṭinappālai*; in its present form it has too many words and features of grammar and prosody that point to a much later date. The reference in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* to winds from *dvīpāntara* (Malaya) laden with the fragrance of cloves is now well known;⁴ and I think that the present reference to Toṇḍi and its trade with the Madura coast is later than the text of Kālidāsa by about a century, if not more.

³ The *Śilappadikāram or the Lay of the Anklet* (1939), p. 204 n. 1.

⁴ *JGIS.*, Vol. IX, *Dvīpāntara*.